

**§ 143B-216.34. Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing – temporary loan program established.**

(a) There is established an assistive equipment loan program for the deaf, hard of hearing, and speech impaired to be developed, administered, and implemented by the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. The assistive equipment loan program supplements the telecommunications equipment distribution program established pursuant to G.S. 62-157.

(b) The Division shall develop rules for the distribution of the communications and alerting equipment and shall determine performance standards. The Division shall select equipment for distribution to qualifying recipients. The equipment discussed in this section shall be leased at no cost to qualifying recipients for a period of time up to and not exceeding two years. Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent the renewal of any lease previously executed with a qualified recipient. In addition, the Division shall provide consultative services and training to those individuals and organizations utilizing communications and alerting equipment pursuant to this section.

(c) The central communications office of each county sheriff's department shall purchase and continually operate at least one telecommunications device that is functionally equivalent in providing equal access to services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and speech impaired.

The central communications office of each police department and firefighting agency in municipalities with a population of 25,000 to 250,000 shall purchase and continually operate at least one such device.

The central communications office of each police department and firefighting agency in municipalities with a population exceeding 250,000 persons shall purchase and continually operate at least two such devices.

(d) Each public safety office, health care facility (including hospitals and urgent care facilities), and the 911 emergency number system is required to obtain a telecommunications device that is functionally equivalent in providing equal access to services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and speech impaired pursuant to this section and shall continually operate and staff the equipment during hours of operation, including up to 24 hours. (1989, c. 533, s. 2; 2007-149, s. 1.)